

My introduction to Bob Dylan was at the beginning of the summer of 1963 when my parents took me to a Pete Seeger concert. Seeger, who was performing a lot of songs by the then-new songwriters congregating for the most part in New York City's Greenwich Village did two Dylan songs, "Who Killed Davey Moore?" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall." The impact of "Hard Rain" was enormous. At the time, I was 11, about to turn 12. I remember my dad saying to me after the song was over, "What do you think that was about?"

That summer, I was shipped off to a summer camp in Maryland, while my family relocated from Philadelphia, to our new home in Millburn, New Jersey, about 20 miles from New York City. "Blowin' In The Wind" by Peter, Paul & Mary was a huge hit that summer, one you heard every time the radio was on. But as A.M. D.J.'s didn't talk about the authors of songs, I had no idea it was written by the same guy who wrote the songs Seeger sang. When I returned home, my brother who went to a different camp in upstate, New York, told me all about this new folksinger-songwriter, who was following in the steps of Woody Guthrie. He'd went to a far hipper camp, in fact a camp that Dylan's girlfriend at the time, Suze Rotolo, had attended a few years before. My brother was already playing guitar, but during the summer he'd somehow acquired a harmonica holder and a couple of harmonicas, and played me several songs. That night or the night after, Bob Dylan was on TV on a show on the educational station about Freedom Songs. My parents had a couple of folk records around the house including some by Woody Guthrie (whom they'd seen perform in New York in the '40s), so I pretty much always knew who he was. On TV that night, wearing ripped blue jeans Bob Dylan looked a lot like Woody Guthrie. A couple of days later, he was on TV again, this time at the March On Washington for Civil Rights.

I spent most of that autumn trying to adjust to live in the suburbs, which I hated, after living in a big city, and listening to the *Freewheelin'* Bob Dylan. At the end of that November, Bob Dylan was going to be in concert in Newark, New Jersey, not far from my town. My parents bought my brother and I tickets. It was the first concert we attended without parents. In the lobby, we ran into some friends of my brother's from camp, and I was treated to my first taste of teenage hysteria as they were flipping out because about 20 minutes before Dylan had walked right by them on his way into the theater.

I can't remember all the songs Dylan did that night, since most of them weren't on *Freewheelin'*, and this concert has yet to make it into the grand parade of setlists. It wasn't sold out, and during intermission, we nervously snuck down from our seats in the balcony to far better seats in the orchestra close to the stage.

He started the show with "Times They Are A-Changin'" and the encore was "With God On Our Side." He also did, "Walls Of Redwing," "Davey Moore," "Talkin' John Birch," "Talking World War III," "Hard Rain," "Don't Think Twice," "Hollis Brown," "Hattie Carroll," and I'm pretty sure, "Restless Farewell."

Introducing "Blowin' In The Wind," he said, "Here's the song *Newsweek* Magazine said I didn't write. Not long before, *Newsweek* had a feature on Dylan that claimed a New Jersey high school student had written the song and sold it to him. Now as fate would have it, the town my parents moved to, was the town Lorre Wyatt was from. He'd just graduated high school, and was part of the high school folk group, the Millburnaires, who actually put out a record available in the record stores of Millburn, New Jersey. To this day, the residents of Millburn, New Jersey still believe that Wyatt wrote the song, even though he eventually recanted the whole thing. So, here I was, 12 years old, acquiring my first hero and the entire population of the town I lived in hated him.

Not long after that, little stickers started appearing in record stores and on girl's notebooks in school that said, "The Beatles are coming!"

A couple of months later, in early winter of 1964, I walked into a record store and there was *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. My first impulse buy. I took it home, and when I heard, "Come mothers and fathers throughout the whole land," that was pretty much it! I was never the same again.

Now back then, there weren't many ways of getting information. There'd be folk music radio shows, and you'd hear stories from people. My parents were politically inclined, so we heard about the Tom Paine Awards Dinner. The main source of Bob Dylan info back then was *Sing Out!*, the folk song magazine which published songs, including new Dylan songs. Other than that you would hear very little and Dylan, having graduated from clubs to concerts did not perform all that often. It was all word of mouth and not too reliable word of mouth.

Late that summer, *Another Side* appeared, and it was the first of many Dylan adjustments. There were no protest or topical songs. About the closest you could come was "Chimes of Freedom," and several songs seemed to be leaning in the direction of rock and roll.

Another Side was followed by an "Open Letter To Bob Dylan" in *Sing Out!* Written by editor, Irwin Silber, it decried Dylan's abandonment

of protest. However the open letter did little to discourage Dylan fans from buying tickets to his concert at the new Philharmonic Hall at the end of October, a concert that put an end to my trick and treating days.

Now, one of the reasons people went to Bob Dylan concerts back then was to hear new songs. That night he did not disappoint. In addition to the new songs from *Another Side* (which had never been performed in New York City), he played (as I'm sure you all know) "If You Gotta Go," "Mama You Been On My Mind," and more to the point, "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Gates Of Eden" and "It's Alright Ma." It was beyond amazing!

Now, on the various Internet Bob Dylan forums, you see a lot of people complaining about the release of this show. "Why this one, everyone has it? Why not the Gospel stuff" and so on. Well for one thing, there's no better document that I've heard of what Bob Dylan was like in concert back then. It's also important to remember that among a certain group of people in New York City, Bob Dylan was a transplanted but very local hero.

Concerts were a very different thing than they are now. For one thing, you got dressed up to go to a concert. Well sort of. In my case that meant putting on a jacket to go with my jeans. But there were no cell phones, there was no talking. If you said anything, you whispered between songs. Yet, at that show, with Dylan in obvious good humor, people felt relaxed enough to shout out usually funny requests or comments and Dylan responded to each one. "Play :Corrina Corrina," "I haven't got my drums." Dylan would never be so delightfully and openly funny in concert again.

Robert Shelton wrote frequently about how Chaplinesque Dylan was, and about how when sitting and talking his left leg would constantly be shaking with energy. At Philharmonic Hall, Dylan never stopped moving. On the recording you can hear him bumping into the mic frequently. What you can't hear however is how loud he was playing and singing. That version of "Don't Think Twice" which will always be my favorite version of that song because it represents what a madman he could be is the closest example.

I left Philharmonic that night, with "Mr. Tambourine Man" in my head, and the wait to hear it again was excruciating. The next afternoon my brother and I (who had stayed in the city) went down to the Village Gate to the very first Broadside Magazine hoot, where all the other New York-based singer-songwriters were to perform - several of them, most notably Phil Ochs had been to the show the

night before. The highlight of that show was when Ochs and Eric Andersen got on stage together and said, there's a couple of songwriters we don't want to leave out, and did The Beatles' "I Should've Known Better." It may have been the beginning of the Broadside Hoots, but that moment was one of the things that signaled the end of the folk movement. The total cost of those two shows was four dollars.

I used to hang around record stores, and at one of the two record stores in town, the guy who ran it would let me in back to rummage through the promotional stuff. While doing just that a couple of months after *Philharmonic*, I came across an album slick that said "Bob Dylan In Concert." The cover was black with the view of Dylan through a spotlight or from the balcony, and it was the first Dylan album cover not to list the songs on the front. I'd been pretty sure that *Philharmonic* was recorded because there were two extra microphones on-stage (not near Dylan) probably to capture the audience and the ambience. Naturally I grabbed that cover and went home.

That February, Dylan made an extremely rare TV appearance on a late-night talk show, *The Les Crane Show*. This was a very different Bob Dylan than the one I'd seen a few months earlier. Gone was the suede jacket and jeans, replaced by a suit jacket with enormous cufflinks, on a snap tab shirt. Introduced, he sang "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," which sounded much more rock and roll than anything on *Freewheelin'* and he was backed by Bruce Langhorne playing a Martin acoustic with a pickup! There were great close-ups during the harp solos, during which Dylan's eyes would roll to the back of his head. My brother could do a great imitation of that and I drove him crazy for the next couple of months begging him to do it. More interesting was that Dylan sat and chatted with Crane for most of the next hour and was hysterically funny. You can kind of tell by the audio. Unfortunately no video of this seems to exist. A very good friend of mine, in fact the person who sent me the *March On Washington* video, and the MTV unplugged video, which I immediately dubbed for about 10 Dylan friends, and ended up being all over the world in about two weeks flat, was a video librarian for ABC, the network Crane was on and he did a search for it and found nothing. At the end of the *Les Crane show*, I remember my brother saying, "He would make a great rock and roll star."

There was a D.J. back then named Jerry White who had a nightly folk show than ran for about four hours. One night, a few weeks after the Crane show, I tuned in and White said somewhat tentatively, "We have a new Bob Dylan single, which I think is going to cause a lot of

controversy.” He then played “Subterranean Homesick Blues.” I didn’t know what to think. Naturally, I bought it the minute it hit the stores.

That summer I went to camp (this time the hipper camp my brother went to). I remember in July one day he came running up to me saying, “Dylan has a new single and it has an organ on it.” We’d heard some stuff about Newport, but not much. Then it was announced Dylan was going to be at Forest Hills, in fact on the very day camp ended. I got off the bus and it was pretty much, Hi dad, here’s my duffle bag, see ya tomorrow,” and off a bunch of us went to Forest Hills. It was a cold and windy night. I ran into my brother who decided to go at the last minute who’d just been arrested for handing out anti-Vietnam literature, the charge was littering. We could hear the band checking over the walls of the stadium, but since Highway 61 wasn’t out yet, no one knew the songs.

This was a very different Dylan show from Philharmonic. The stage was way out in the middle of the field. Unlike the two previous Dylan concerts, this one had emcees, various New York disc jockeys, among them top 40 dj’s Gary Stevens and Murray the K, the self-proclaimed 5th Beatle, who was roundly booed when he started saying, “And I wanna tell ya all baby, that Bobby baby is what’s happening!” Also present was the folk d.j. Jerry White.

Dylan came out wearing the suit (or one very similar) to what he wore on Les Crane and started with “She Belongs To Me.” During the harp break he walked to the side of the stage and started posing as he was playing for photographers. Unlike Philharmonic, there were no protest songs. There was however a brand new song, a song totally different than anything Dylan had done before, “Desolation Row.” Dylan’s timing was perfect and the audience was in hysterics on such lines as “One hand is on the tightrope walker/The other in his pants.”

All was peaceful, but then after intermission Dylan came out with Robbie Robertson on guitar, Levon Helm on drums, Harvey Brooks on bass and Al Kooper on keyboards and blasted into “Tombstone Blues.” Dylan’s hair was blowing all over the place, the keyboard seemed to glow this weird green and half the audience erupted into boos. Saying nothing, Dylan kept on. You wondered if there would be a riot. Somewhere around the third song a bunch of boys who couldn’t have been more than 15 at the most ran across the field and onto the stage, chased by New York City cops. The boys weaved in and around the musicians who never stopped playing followed the cops. It was really strange. Dylan put down his guitar and went to the piano, starting the beginning of what we now know was “Ballad Of A Thin Man,”

saying his only words of the 2nd set, "Aw, come on." I left the show not knowing what to think, but a few days later, walking down the main street of our town with my brother, I thought I saw a familiar face in the record store window. It was *Highway 61 Revisited*.

Two months later in October, I had a job a couple of days after school and on Saturday mornings. So after my job, I got on a bus and went to Newark to Symphony Hall which was actually the Mosque theater (the first place I saw Dylan) with a new name and bought a ticket for the show that night. The ticket said "stage site," and in those days for sell-out shows they would actually have people seated on the stage in folding chairs. Newark was not a place to hang out, and I had just enough money for the bus home and the return trip to and from Newark. As the bus pulled away I saw a Cadillac limo with a lot of hair in the back seat that looked like it was headed for Symphony Hall.

Positively Fourth Street was a huge hit at the time. (A brief aside here: One night a friend of mine called me up and held the phone to the radio. "Listen to this he said excitedly, they announced it as Positively 4th Street, but it's not!" Over the phone I could hear something about crawl out your window." While a single of that song came out late that November, it wasn't the one I heard in the radio which I wouldn't hear again till at least six years later). That night, in the lobby for the first time, there were kids from my high school. "What are you doing here they said to me?" I said back, "The question is what are *you* doing here?"

I went into to find my seat, expecting to be on the stage. To my astonishment, I was pointed towards the orchestra. They'd put down about five rows of chairs over the orchestra pit and my seat was in the first row 2nd seat from the center aisle! I couldn't believe it! Dylan came out and did the same acoustic set he'd done at Forest Hills. There were two rent-a-cops on either side of the the stage. He was incredibly pale, his face was the cover of Times They Are A-Changin', except his hair was real long. During "Gates Of Eden," he started coughing. A guard brought him some water. "Excuse me, I just got over a case of leprosy," Dylan said.

After the intermission five guys in suits and extremely short hair took the stage. The organist looked like Jonathan Winters. There was a wall of Fender Showman amps running across the stage. Dylan came out and they blasted into "Tombstone Blues." It was insanely loud. With Dylan on rhythm, it left the guitar player, the piano player and the organ player room to solo freely which they did. Dylan never stopped moving. I would find out shortly after this was Levon & The

Hawks - there was no program at the show. I had them on a John Hammond record. The 2nd or 3rd song was "Baby Let Me Follow Down." I went nuts. I couldn't believe it. This may have been the live debut of this song in its electric incarnation (at least according to Olof's files). And then on through what we know know as the standard electric set. There was no booing at all, but there was (unlike at Forest Hills) an encore, "Positively 4th Street."

In the lobby, I ran into a kid from my neighborhood. His father offered to give me a ride home, which I gratefully accepted. Newark was not a good place to be waiting for a bus late at night. "What's this all about? I don't get it," his father said over and over in the car.

I didn't know it then, but it would be seven years and a few months before I would see Bob Dylan in concert again.